

filed on May 28, 1999, which is in turn a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/980,496 filed December 1, 1997, now U.S. Patent No. 5,935,726 issued August 10, 1999.

The claims of the present continuation are related to, but are generally narrower than, certain corresponding claims in the prior '496 application, now U.S. Patent No. 5,935,726. In this regard, claim 1 of the present continuation application is related to and corresponds with claim 1 of the '726 patent, but with a further limitation that the method of distributing water is performed in an array of fuel cell stacks instead of simply in a fuel cell, as recited in claim 1 of the '726 patent. Dependent claims 2-6 of the present continuation application add further limitations to and/or modify the limitations recited in their base claim 1.

Similarly, independent claim 7 of the present continuation application is related to and corresponds with claim 9 of the '726 patent, but with a further limitation that the method of distributing water is performed in an array of fuel cell stacks instead of simply in a fuel cell, as recited in claim 9 of the '726 patent. In addition, claim 7 of the present application omits the previous limitation, recited in claim 9 of the '726 patent, that the fuel stream be substantially pure. Dependent

claim 8 of the present continuation application adds further limitations to those recited in its base claim 7.

Independent claim 9 of the present continuation application is also related to and corresponds with claim 9 of the '726 patent, but with a slightly different limitation regarding the nature of the fuel stream, namely, that the method of distributing water is performed in a fuel cell utilizing water in a substantially poison-free fuel stream (claim 9 of the present continuation application) rather than water in a substantially pure fuel stream (claim 9 of the '726 patent). Dependent claim 10 of the present continuation application adds further limitations to those recited in its base claim 10.

Independent claim 11 of the present continuation application is related to and corresponds with claim 1 of the '726 patent, but with a further limitation that the temperature profile within the oxidant stream is controlled so that oxidant stream temperature generally increases in the flow direction. Dependent claim 12 of the present continuation application adds further limitations to those recited in its base claim 11.

Finally, independent claim 13 of the present continuation application is related to and corresponds with claim 12 of the

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'726 patent, but with further limitations of a coolant system being present, which comprises at least one coolant passage associated with the fuel cell for receiving a coolant fluid which flows through the coolant passage(s), and a coolant fluid flow switching device for periodically reversing the direction of coolant fluid flow through the coolant passage(s). Dependent claim 14 of the present continuation application adds further limitations to those recited in its base claim 13.

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In view of the foregoing remarks, applicants request consideration and allowance of claims 1-14 of the present application.

Please charge any fees incurred in connection with these Preliminary Remarks to Deposit Account No. 13-0017.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert W. Fieseler
Registration No. 31,826
Attorney for Applicants

Michael B. Harlin
Registration No. 43,658
McANDREWS, HELD & MALLOY, LTD.
500 West Madison Street, 34th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60661

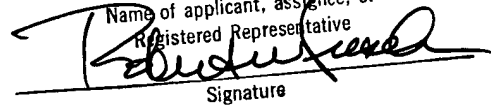
Telephone (312) 775-8000
Facsimile (312) 775-8100

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